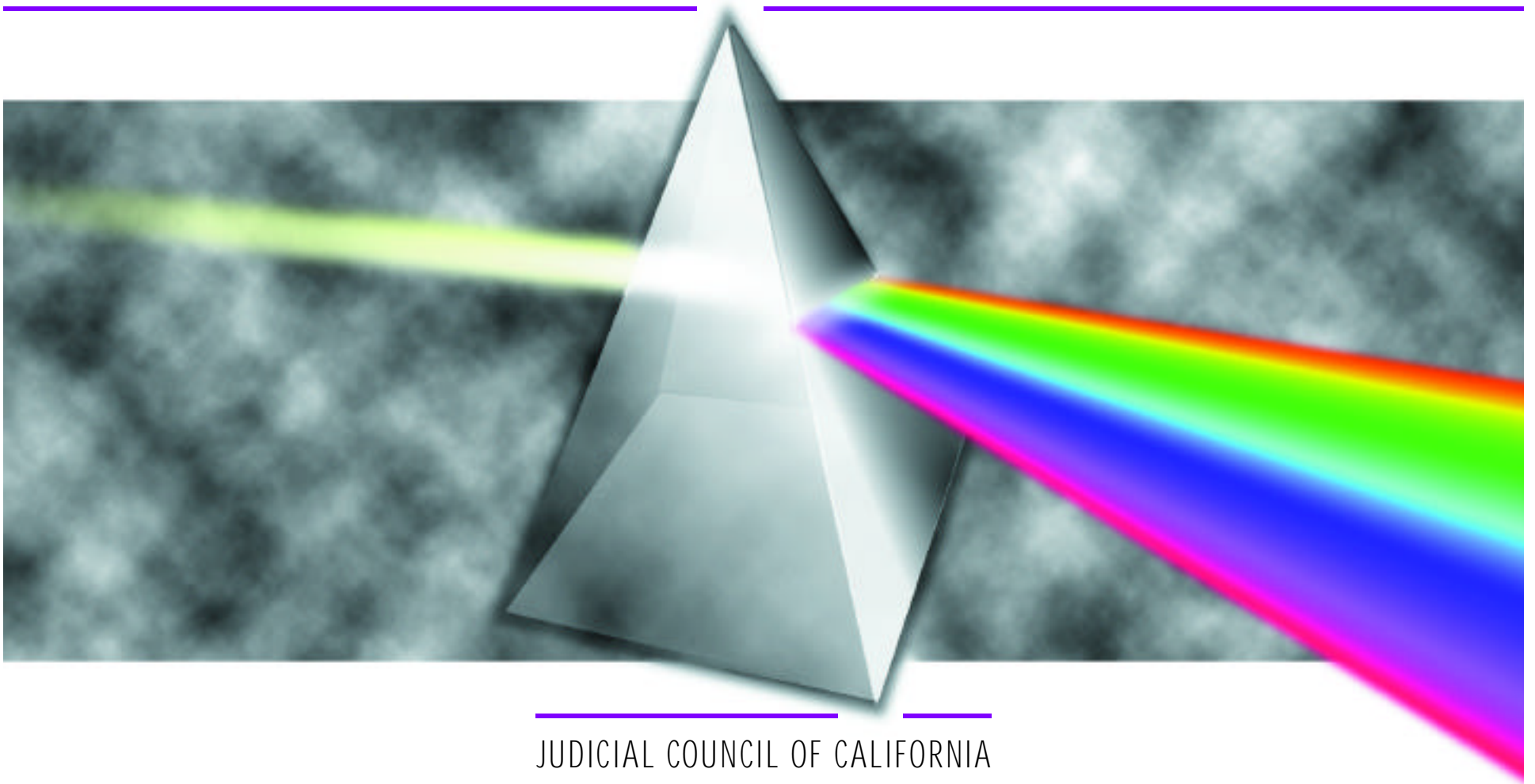
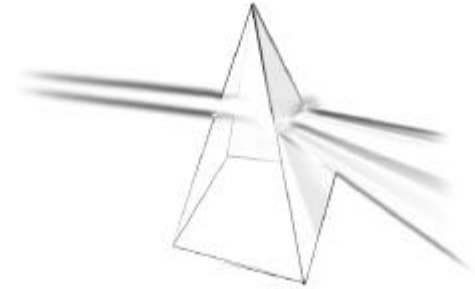

LEADING JUSTICE INTO THE FUTURE



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC PLAN
UPDATED APRIL 29, 1999



JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN



INTRODUCTION

The Judicial Council's existing long-range strategic plan, titled *Leading Justice Into the Future*, was initially adopted on May 16, 1997. This updated version of the strategic plan reflects changes that the council discussed at its annual planning workshop in February 1999 and approved at its April 1999 business meeting. Overall, the basic structure of the strategic plan is unchanged; however, the new version reflects the following types of changes:

- *Format* changes, including the addition of issue statements that provide contextual background for each goal and the revision of goal statements to more clearly describe our strategic direction.
- *Organizational* changes, including the creation of a new Goal VI, Technology, intended to increase the visibility of branchwide technology-related goals and policy directions, as well as other minor changes to improve the plan's readability.
- *Language* changes to reflect new or broadened responsibilities of the judicial branch created by major legislative changes, such as state trial court funding and unification, or changes resulting from significant internal or external developments affecting the courts.

The Judicial Council may consider additional revisions to its strategic plan after reviewing local trial court strategic plans in early 2000. Given the interim nature of this version of the Judicial Council's strategic plan, interested parties are encouraged to reproduce additional copies of this document as needed. The updated strategic plan is also posted on the California Courts Web site at www.courtinfo.ca.gov.

**JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA
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MISSION OF THE JUDICIARY

The judiciary shall, in a fair, accessible, effective, and efficient manner, resolve disputes arising under the law; and shall interpret and apply the law consistently, impartially, and independently to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitutions of California and the United States.

MISSION OF THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the law, and the mission of the judiciary, the Judicial Council shall be responsible for setting the direction and providing the leadership for improving the quality and advancing the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Consistent with its mission statement, the Judicial Council shall be guided by the following principles:

1. To make decisions in the best interests of the public and the court system as a whole.
2. To conduct the council's business based on an underlying commitment to equal and timely justice and public access to an independent forum for the resolution of disputes.
3. To provide leadership in the administration of justice by planning and advocating for policies and resources that are necessary for courts to fulfill their mission.
4. To ensure the continued development of an accessible, independent court system through planning, research, and evaluation programs, and through the use of modern management approaches and technological developments.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES (continued)

5. To provide leadership in the administration of justice by establishing broad and consistent policies for the operation of the courts and appropriate uniform statewide rules and forms.
6. To promote a competent, responsive, and ethical judiciary and staff through a comprehensive program of judicial education and training for court employees.
7. To contribute to the public's understanding of the judicial process through a continuing program of public education.
8. To provide assistance to the courts in developing action plans that are consistent with the council's long-range strategic plan and that address local needs and priorities.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE DESCRIPTION: *California's courts are challenged with serving a growing population that is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse in the nation. Individuals of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds will soon compose the majority of the state's population. California residents speak 224 different languages and innumerable dialects. Literacy levels of both English-speaking and limited- or non-English-speaking residents also vary. In addition to the access issues created by the state's diversity, past and present societal biases against characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability also create barriers that make it more difficult for some individuals to fully access court services or fully participate in court business. Factors such as geography, socioeconomic status, and procedural practices may also create barriers to court services for some segments of the state's population.*

GOAL I. ACCESS, FAIRNESS, AND DIVERSITY

All Californians will have equal access to the courts, and equal ability to participate in court proceedings, and will be treated in a fair and just manner. Members of the judicial branch community will reflect the rich diversity of the state's residents.

Policy Directions:

1. Identify and eliminate bias in the courts.
2. Broaden and facilitate access to and understanding of the court process for all persons served by the courts, including unrepresented, low- or middle-income, disabled, and non-English-speaking individuals.
3. Develop and maintain training and appropriate certification programs for court employees and court-related personnel whose services help broaden access to the courts.
4. Encourage diversity among applicants seeking to become and individuals serving as judges, other judicial officers, court personnel, and members of court-sponsored committees and programs to ensure the richness of diverse perspectives and an inclusive environment.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE DESCRIPTION: *The judiciary is one of the three distinct and separate branches of state government. As such, the judiciary must exercise its inherent and statutory authority and responsibility to plan for, direct, monitor, and control the business of the judicial branch and must account to the public for the branch's performance. The judicial branch is responsible for managing its affairs, which includes securing, allocating, and accounting for public resources. In exercising these responsibilities, the judicial branch needs to work cooperatively with the state's executive and legislative branches. The judiciary also must maintain the ability to make case-related decisions free from external pressures of a personal, economic, or political nature, including any fear of reprisal, to retain the trust and confidence of the public as an independent, fair, and impartial arbiter of disputes.*

GOAL II. INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The judiciary will be an institutionally independent, separate branch of government that responsibly seeks, uses, and accounts for public resources necessary for its support. The independence of judicial decision making will be protected.

Policy Directions:

A. Branch Independence

1. Obtain adequate funding and resources for the support and operation of the courts.
2. Allocate resources in a judicious manner that serves to further the goals of the judicial branch.
3. Exercise the inherent and statutory authority of the judiciary to plan for and manage its funding, personnel, resources, and records, and to practice independent rule making concerning court operations and procedures.
4. Provide, support, and encourage leadership within the judicial branch.
5. Enhance methods for early, direct, and clear communications that serve to inform legislators, the executive branch, the legal community, local government, the public, and others about issues of concern to the Judicial Council.
6. Inform judges and court staff about the statewide needs of the judiciary, the role of the Judicial Council, and ways to participate in the process of establishing broad statewide policies.
7. Exercise leadership in efforts designed to resolve matters of statewide concern.

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GOAL II. INDEPENDENCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY (continued)

Policy Directions:

B. Independence of Judicial Decision Making

1. Evaluate and address judicial recruitment and retention issues, especially with respect to factors that motivate individuals to enter or remain in service.
2. Address the effect of executive and legislative branch actions on the independence of the courts.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE DESCRIPTION: *Expanding workloads resulting from greater numbers of cases, increased case complexity, and the courts' need to respond to the information requirements of many entities are putting pressure on the California court system's ability to fulfill its responsibilities. Caseload increases and backlogs have been experienced in recent years at all levels of the state court system. Due to the courts' historical bifurcated funding structure, planning and implementation of judicial administration policies, practices, and systems have been fragmented. As a result, administrative practices and systems used by the courts are dated and vary across the state. Yet the public is entitled to the efficient and convenient delivery of court services and to the resolution of disputes in a just and timely manner. The effective administration of justice requires deliberate attention to ensuring that the core processes and essential activities of the judicial branch are contemporary and to promoting excellence and continuous improvement in these areas.*

GOAL III. MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Justice will be administered in a timely, efficient, and effective manner that utilizes contemporary management practices; innovative ideas; highly competent judges, other judicial officers, and staff; and adequate facilities.

Policy Directions:

A. Trial and Appellate Court Management

1. Support the efforts of courts to employ sound management practices that foster the efficient use of public resources and enhance the effective delivery of court services.
2. Develop policies to implement and promote trial court unification, coordination, and other efficiencies and innovations.
3. Support the efforts of courts to employ highly qualified individuals who are selected through a competitive process and promote expectations for court personnel to demonstrate high standards of professionalism, ethics, and personal behavior.
4. Encourage courts to foster a work environment that recognizes employees' value and promotes professional growth, development, and employee well-being.
5. Encourage courts to develop and implement best management practices in judicial administration.

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GOAL III. MODERNIZATION OF MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION (continued)

Policy Directions:

A. Trial and Appellate Court Management (continued)

6. Support efforts to develop and promote adequate security through a variety of methods, such as security personnel, equipment, and security-oriented procedures, to provide a safe environment for all persons who occupy or visit court facilities.
7. Plan for the development and financing of new court facilities and improve existing court facilities to provide adequate, suitable space for the conduct of court business, including appropriately equipped and furnished waiting areas for individuals such as children, jurors, victims, witnesses, and others who visit court facilities.

B. Trial and Appellate Case Management

1. Encourage courts to establish innovative practices to reduce delays and make other improvements in case processing.
2. Assist courts to develop systems that actively manage workload, including case calendar and trial management.
3. Support the efforts of courts to establish and implement comprehensive programs to improve compliance with court orders, including the collection of fines, fees, and forfeitures.
4. Review and, if needed, revise uniform statewide policies, rules, standards, and forms.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE DESCRIPTION: *The judicial branch serves an ever-changing society. Social and legal trends such as changing family structure, increasing awareness of domestic violence, and developing changes in dispute resolution practices are a few examples of the dynamic nature of society. The judicial branch serves multiple constituencies that have differing levels of knowledge about and contact with the judiciary. The quality and timeliness of dispute resolution affects both the quality of life for residents and the quality of the state's business environment. To be a relevant, stabilizing force in society, the judicial branch must be responsive to emerging issues and changes and must foster and retain the respect, trust, and confidence of its diverse constituencies. Community outreach and education are essential to these efforts.*

GOAL IV. QUALITY OF JUSTICE AND SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

Judicial branch services will be responsive to the needs of the public and will enhance the public's understanding, and use of and its confidence in the judiciary.

Policy Directions:

1. Emphasize assisting the court user as a priority for all court personnel.
2. Increase public trust and understanding by including, in appropriate court programs, community participation and community outreach and education about the court system.
3. Reduce the expense of litigation through simplification and standardization of court practices and procedures at all levels, where appropriate.
4. Conduct a comprehensive program at all court levels to improve proceedings affecting children and families.
5. Support the appropriate development, maintenance, and expansion of successful alternative dispute resolution programs administered either by the courts alone or in conjunction with professional or community-based organizations.
6. Support efforts, including implementation of one-day/one-trial programs, to improve the quality of jury service and other approaches that heighten awareness of civic responsibility for jury service.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE DESCRIPTION: *The quality of justice administered by the state's courts is directly related to the quality and competence of the people who work in the judicial branch. California's judicial system employs thousands of individuals, including judges, other judicial officers, court support staff, court managers, and various administrative personnel. With the increasing complexity of the law and court procedures, delivery of justice to the people of California requires judges and court personnel to be equipped with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable them to administer the justice system in a fair, effective manner that fosters public confidence.*

GOAL V. EDUCATION

The effectiveness of judges, court personnel, and other judicial branch staff will be enhanced through high-quality continuing education and professional development.

Policy Directions:

1. Provide for comprehensive education and training programs for appellate and trial judges, other judicial officers, and court personnel that address essential needs and requirements including access, fairness, diversity, and ethics training.
2. Develop education standards for appellate and trial judges, other judicial officers, and court personnel that promote professional development and continuing education programs.
3. Enhance the use of alternative approaches to delivering judicial branch education services.
4. Establish incentives and offer recognition for participation in judicial branch education.

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE DESCRIPTION: *Technology can facilitate the timely flow of information within the judicial branch and to other public agencies that are partners in the justice system. However, due to the historically bifurcated funding of the state's courts, technology planning has been fragmented and resource levels have varied among the courts. As a result, technological resources used by courts are often incompatible and vary dramatically across jurisdictions. Rapidly evolving technological advances offer the judicial branch tremendous opportunities to develop coordinated solutions to statewide problems of data integrity, information distribution, and service delivery and to thereby eliminate redundant expenditures.*

GOAL VI. TECHNOLOGY

Technology will enhance the quality of justice by improving the ability of the judicial branch to collect, process, analyze, and share information and by increasing the public's access to information about the judicial branch.

Policy Directions:

1. Develop and maintain a strategic plan for the effective application of technology to the needs of the judicial branch and the justice system.
2. Design and put into place an infrastructure that will provide the staff, hardware, software, and technology management necessary to support the computing services and telecommunications required to meet the information technology needs of the judicial branch.
3. Assist courts in development, acquisition, implementation, and use of technology to improve their management of court operations and resources.
4. Use technology to collect, process, and share information that courts require to process cases, manage their resources, and meet the needs of the public, justice system partners, and others; encourage and fund innovative, cost-effective, technology-related pilot projects that have potential for branchwide application.
5. Establish communication links that meet the needs of the judicial branch, its partners in the justice system, the public, and others with legitimate needs, through implementation of technology outreach programs.